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EXPRESSED OPINIONS AND UNDERSTANDINGS
OF REGULAR CLASSROOM TEACHERS
TOWARD THE MENTALLY RETARDED

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CHAPTER I

In many school districts educable mentally retarded children are currently being educated in special classes in regular schools rather than in separate schools for the retarded. It is hoped by this method to eliminate some of the stigma attached to mental retardation by providing social contact between retarded and non-retarded children. Some educators believe that a psychological segregation of mentally retarded children still exists due, in part, to their non-acceptance by the regular classroom teachers in the building.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study was (1) to present the expressed opinions of regular classroom teachers toward mentally retarded children and (2) to determine whether contact with retarded children provided for more favorable teacher attitudes toward them.

Basic assumptions. Basic to this study were the following assumptions: (1) attitudes pertinent to the problem of this study were measurable, (2) opinions expressed by the subjects in this study through their reaction to the items on the instrument reflected their attitudes toward the mentally retarded.

Importance of the study. The child with an impaired self-image who feels shunned, unworthy, inadequate, insignificant, or guilty will have disabilities in many areas.¹ The relationships between himself and others are the basis for the child's self-concept. An inadequate self-concept cripples the individual by limiting or narrowing his repertoire of available responses in any given situation. An adequate self-concept facilitates the actualization of the individual's potentialities, thus enabling his available repertoire of responses to be increased or broadened.²

A teacher's attitude toward a child is a factor in defining that child's self-concept and, consequently, in determining the amount of success a child will attain. For this reason, it is possible for a retarded child with an inadequate self-concept to experience psychological segregation, even though he is in a school building with non-retarded children. It is important to determine the attitudes of regular class teachers so that, if unfavorable attitudes exist, measures can be taken to help teachers gain a greater understanding and acceptance of retarded children.

¹Laurence J. Peter, Prescriptive Teaching (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), p. 29.

²Ibid., p. 32.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Developmental B. "Developmental B" is a special education classroom classification of elementary educable mentally retarded children in Des Moines, Iowa. Their chronological ages generally range from six to thirteen years.

Educable mentally retarded. The educable mentally retarded are those individuals possessing an intelligence quotient which falls in a range from fifty-five to seventy-nine.

They generally have the capacity to acquire the academic skills required for literacy. They are usually educated in special classes and later are employed at routine and service-type occupations and achieve independence in most normal situations.¹

Psychological segregation. Psychological segregation refers to the awareness of non-acceptance which an individual possesses even though he is not physically isolated.

Regular classroom teacher. Regular classroom teacher refers to a teacher who does not teach a class of retarded children.

¹Ibid., p. 110.

III. PROCEDURE

A questionnaire containing items which discriminate between favorable and unfavorable attitudes toward the retarded, according to the authorities listed in the bibliography, was submitted to regular classroom teachers in elementary schools containing special classes and in elementary schools not containing special classes. This questionnaire was approved by the Supervisor of Special Education in Des Moines.

The elementary schools in the 1966-1967 Des Moines Public Schools Directory were divided alphabetically into two groups, those containing Developmental B classrooms and those not containing Developmental B classrooms. Nine schools contained these special classrooms and forty-eight schools did not. Of the forty-eight schools not containing special education classrooms every other regular teacher of every fifth school was selected. Every other regular teacher of each of the nine schools containing these special classes was also selected. This method of sampling was chosen in order to obtain a large enough sample to validate the instrument.

A total of 145 subjects from eighteen schools were involved in this study. Of the 107 completed questionnaires seventy-nine subjects had taught in a school containing a Developmental B classroom and twenty-eight had not.

The questionnaires were delivered to the chosen schools through the Des Moines Public Schools delivery service. Each principal was instructed in writing to place the questionnaires in the mail boxes of the teachers on the list given to him. If a particular teacher was no longer in the school the questionnaire was to go to the teacher who replaced him. The subjects then filled out the questionnaires and mailed them to the investigator in the stamped, addressed envelopes provided.

Of the 145 questionnaires which were distributed, 107 or 73.8 per cent were returned completed and seven were returned unanswered with the notation that those teachers were no longer at the chosen schools and had not been replaced. Thirty-one questionnaires were not returned. Approximately one hundred questionnaires were returned within one week from the date of distribution. The remaining questionnaires were returned during the following two weeks.

The responses to the questionnaires were categorized into two groups, Group A, those subjects who had taught in a school containing a special classroom for mentally retarded children and Group B, those subjects who had not. The responses to the items were then tallied and analyzed. A summary of the data is presented with an evaluation of the responses.

Limitations. This study was limited to regular elementary classroom teachers in the Des Moines Public School System.

CHAPTER II

The review of literature for this study is divided into two parts: (1) the review of literature pertinent toward understanding the retarded and (2) the review of studies concerned with teacher-attitudes toward the retarded.

I. UNDERSTANDING THE MENTALLY RETARDED

Mentally retarded people must be understood before any problems concerning mental retardation can be solved. It is even conceivable to state that if those concerned were more knowledgeable concerning the mentally retarded members of their community, it would be possible for many of these members to lead satisfactory lives outside of an institution.¹ "Often our modern placing agencies stress the fact that limited capacity is not the chief bar to employment, but rather poor social adaptation in behavior and outlook."²

Merely deploring the fact that a certain proportion of the human race are of relatively low intelligence

¹Arnold Gesell, The Retarded Child: How to Help Him (Bloomington, Illinois: Public School Publishing Company, 1938), p. 37.

²Stanley Powell Davies, The Mentally Retarded in Society (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 137.

does not aid in the solution of the problems of retardation. Many people of lesser intelligence are capable of finding places of usefulness and happiness in the present society. Many of the intellectually subnormal actually have a definite and important function in society. There are numerous routine tasks that can well be performed day in and day out by the subnormal.¹

Psychological examinations of factory employees have shown, to the employer's surprise, that some of the best operatives are retarded. They are steady, faithful workers who can best stand humdrum toil. A large firm in New York City, after experimenting with its messenger service, came to the conclusion that the retarded youth made the most satisfactory messenger because he was likely to be the most faithful to his duties and was content to hold his position longer than the normal boy. In other studies the same facts have been brought out. Arthur S. Otis in his "The Selection of Mill Workers by Mental Test" tested 300 workers and found no correlation between intelligence and ability to perform the work well. Personnel managers of textile mills took the position that textile mills formerly were operated largely by children and therefore they could see no reason why adults with only childlike intelligence should not be able to do perfectly acceptable work. After experimentation it was found that they could.²

The entire education program of the mentally retarded child should be based on the premise that the major consideration in his education is to make him

¹Ibid., pp. 227-228.

²Ibid.

acceptable to his fellows.¹ Just as all children have more similarities than differences, so also are likenesses of children more important than deviations. "Mentally retarded children have the same physical, emotional, and psychological needs as all children. They desire friends and the approval of others."² Learning to get along with other youngsters is necessary for happy, successful living.

Characteristics of mentally retarded children.

There are two characteristics which are common to mentally retarded youngsters: their measurable degree of intellectual impairment on tests of intelligence, and the prognosis they possess of having learning difficulties. However, as far as other human characteristics are concerned, they vary greatly. This is due to the fact that mental retardation covers such a range of intellectual impairment that the general or statistical descriptions do not apply to all of the individuals in the group.³ "Many will have a consistent level of abilities

¹Roy DeVerl Willey and Kathleen Barnette Waite, The Mentally Retarded Child: Identification, Acceptance and Curriculum (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher, 1964), p. 77.

²Ibid., p. 81.

³Laurence J. Peter, Prescriptive Teaching (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), p. 113.

across the functions tested and evaluated, while others will show different verbal and performance scores."¹

"Children who are mentally handicapped can also be retarded below their capacities, and may have a genuine reading problem, and need remedial care."² The term handicap is used here in regard to its significance to the learning process. The chief weakness of the mentally retarded youngster then, is his intellectual deficiency.

The physical appearance of mentally retarded children does not distinguish them from their normal classmates. Most educable mentally retarded children are six years of age when they enter school and are only suspected of being retarded when they fail to learn to read.³ Physical appearance is not a valid criterion of mental retardation. Many atypical looking children have normal intelligence.

Misshapen head, small head girth, over large or deformed ears, poorly formed nose, open mouth, coarse flabby skin, thick, stumpy fingers, "peculiar" hands, weak hand grasp, generally stupid expression - these and other physical signs have importance only when they are combined with mental inferiority. It is much safer and more scientific for the teacher to pay attention to how a child uses his body and

¹Ibid., p. 112.

²Willey, op. cit., p. 87.

³Peter, op. cit., p. 120.

his hands, how he walks, climbs stairs, handles things, how he plays and works. For, after all, it is his mental characteristics, his behavior, that count.¹

Although many retarded children have good physical health, vision and hearing, they have more physical defects as a group.² This may be due to the fact that some mental retardation is the result of infection or other organic impairment.

Retarded children do not learn as quickly or achieve as much academically as do children of normal intellect. "Most of these children will rarely achieve beyond fourth-grade ability."³ They are inclined to forget rapidly unless they have much practice, repetition and over-learning. Their attention span is short and there is very little, if any, transfer of training.⁴

Mentally retarded children generally do not differ from normal children as far as personality characteristics are concerned. When differences are found, they are invariably the outcome of frustrations resulting from failure

¹Arnold Gesell, The Retarded Child: How to Help Him (Bloomington, Illinois: Public School Publishing Company, 1938), pp. 15-16.

²Peter, op. cit., p. 121.

³Willey, op. cit., p. 45.

⁴Peter, op. cit., p. 112.

to meet the requirements of school and society. "Feelings of security, belongingness, and accomplishment have been thwarted as a result of the child's inability to cope with the standard requirements of his environment."¹

When this occurs the retarded child is more apt to show self-distrust, physical timidity, dependence and deference. He then lacks the ability to make friends, to take the initiative in social activity or to engage in activities requiring leadership and competition. He also tends to lack confidence in himself, creativity, self-defense, curiosity and playfulness.²

Mentally retarded children need special consideration. It is evident that the mentally retarded child needs special consideration. "With special instruction these children can acquire sufficient knowledge and ability to enable them to become socially adequate and occupationally or economically self-sufficient as adults."³ Since these children do not have the ability to deal

¹Samuel A. Kirk and G. Orville Johnson, Educating the Retarded Child (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951), p. 357.

²Roy DeVerl Willey and Kathleen Barnette Waite, The Mentally Retarded Child: Identification, Acceptance and Curriculum (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher, 1964), p. 16.

³Ibid., p. 42.

with abstract concepts and since they cannot be expected to master all the academic skills required of pupils whose intelligence is normal, then only skills that will help them to develop into useful adults should be stressed.¹ Consequently, most educational programs for the retarded stress social and emotional growth. Also emphasized are the use of motor coordination, visual, auditory and kinesthetic discrimination, as well as the development of language and number concepts and acceptable behavior.² An important concept underlying educational programs for the retarded is the fact that standards of achievement should be set at the child's level. "It cannot be stressed too much or too often that 'Individual instruction is a key to success in teaching the mentally retarded'."³

Individualized instruction is best carried out in special classes. However, it is possible that isolation from regular contacts with normal children can hinder the personality growth of the retarded child and lead to feelings of inferiority and rejection. At the same time the physical placement of a retarded child in a regular classroom does not guarantee his acceptance or his integration with his classmates.

¹Ibid., p. 94. ²Ibid., p. 77. ³Ibid., p. 90.

Most studies indicated that retarded children showed greater academic achievement in the regular class but showed superior social adjustment in the special class. The social adjustment in the special class should be interpreted in terms of the protected environment.¹

When a choice must be made between superior social adjustment or academic achievement, it is social adjustment which acquires primary importance. Just as personality is the objective of every teacher so also is socialization the ultimate aim of all work with the retarded. Socialization here means "the development of personality in relation to environment so that within the limits of his ability the individual may become a social asset instead of a social liability."² This is in accordance with the aim of all education.

A major socializing force is the public school. Social qualities are developed through regular hours, study discipline, group activities and success in achievement of goals. Although conformity to group behavior is required there is also encouragement for initiative, steady growth of interests, and increasing responsibility for self-management.³ Although special

¹Laurence J. Peter, Prescriptive Teaching (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), p. 92.

²Stanley Powell Davies, The Mentally Retarded in Society (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 215.

³Ibid., p. 222.

classes for the retarded are usually located in regular public schools, these classes generally operate in a self-contained fashion. The retarded children are apart from normal children for all or nearly all of their classroom instruction. Since the society in which these children will live as adults will not be divided into homogeneous groups the schools have attempted to integrate the retarded children with the normal children by providing the same lunch hour and playground, use of the same hallways and lavatory facilities, and many such items. Regular classroom teachers often form their opinions of retarded children in just such situations.

II. STUDIES CONCERNING TEACHER-ATTITUDES

The questionnaire used in this study was patterned after the "Scale of Attitudes Toward the Mentally Retarded" used in a report by Meyen entitled "A Study of Attitudes and Understandings of Lay Persons and Regular Classroom Teachers Toward the Mentally Retarded".¹ In Meyen's report, it was found that the subjects who possessed the most desirable attitudes toward the retarded were those teachers who were employed in districts spon-

¹Edward L. Meyen, "A Study of Attitudes and Understandings of Lay Persons and Regular Classroom Teachers Toward the Mentally Retarded" (Des Moines, Iowa: State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction, 1964), (Mimeographed.)

soring special classes for educable mentally retarded children. Thus, it was believed that sponsorship of a special class for retarded children was a factor in establishing positive attitudes on the part of regular class teachers. Other influencing factors toward positive attitudes were college course work in the area of the retarded and the experience of having previously known a mentally retarded child. There was considerable agreement in the direction of responses between the various sample groups in terms of item analysis. There also appeared to be considerable indecision concerning those items which referred specifically to a retarded child or to those items in the questionnaire which called upon the subject to refer to his or her child. The subjects involved in Meyen's study felt a need for more information on mental retardation and recognized the fact that special class placement is the most appropriate for mentally retarded children. These findings corresponded closely with the findings obtained by the writer in interviewing Des Moines regular class teachers.

Another study concerning teacher attitudes was undertaken by Wilbanks. In his study, "Factors Observed by Teachers in Relation to Mental Retardation", questionnaires were filled out by teachers who had classroom experiences with both mentally retarded and normal groups.

The items on the questionnaire were generally categorized into five subjects for comparative purposes, namely: (1) Personality Factors, (2) Mental Characteristics, (3) Factors of Health, (4) Social Factors, and (5) Home Factors. The findings indicated that, as compared with normal groups, retarded classes were different in the direction of poorer quality. The factor, Sense of Personal Freedom, was the only exception.¹

Very few studies have addressed themselves to the teacher of the special class concerning his attitudes and expectations. However, the teacher is likely to affect the child's behavior in many ways. Johnson, in discussing possible bases for special class retardates not achieving as well as regular class retardates, has looked to the special class teacher. A review of some studies on stress and drive led Johnson to state,

Where much of the stress (drive to learn, achieve or perform) has been removed from the learning situation, as in special classes where the primary objective is to remove pressures and make the child happy, little learning can take place despite the instruction that may be provided.²

¹J. C. Wilbanks, "Factors Observed by Teachers in Relation to Mental Retardation," California Journal of Educational Research, VII (1956), pp. 116-121.

²G. O. Johnson, "Special Education for the Mentally Retarded - a Paradox," Exceptional Children, XXXIX, (1962), p. 68.

Theory and research related to school placement of retarded children should include recognition of the nature of the differences between special and regular class teachers. Accordingly, the special focus of this study was on ways that regular and special class teachers differ in their attitudes and expectations regarding the educable mentally retarded child. Thirteen teachers of elementary level educable retardates and twenty-one teachers of regular elementary grades were included in this study. Two questions were presented to the teachers. The first question asked the teachers to rate the following from one to five in order of importance in their classroom: good citizenship, social adjustment, reading achievement, personal adjustment, and academic performance. The second question asked the teachers to rank on a five point scale, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, their reaction to the statement that most children of lower ability would do better if made to try harder.

The findings indicate that the special class teacher places greater emphasis on personal and social adjustment factors than does the regular class teacher. Also, the special class teachers are less demanding to have the low ability child try harder. These conclusions support the contention of Johnson and others that special

classes may be understimulating the retarded child in the area of academic performance.

The two questions which were presented to the small sample of teachers certainly do not represent a detailed or broad look at expectations and attitudes. Additional process studies, such as this one, that focus on attitudes, modes of communication, or nature of teacher pupil interaction should serve to further illuminate the nature of the special class placement.

An area involving the attitudes of the retardates themselves toward the academic demands they face in class was the topic of a study by Meyerowitz. He demonstrated that a group of educable mentally retarded children increased in feelings of self derogation after a one year placement in special classes.¹

¹J. H. Meyerowitz, "Self-derogation in Young Retardates and Special Class Placement," Child Development, XXXIII, (1962), pp. 443-551.

CHAPTER III

A design of the study has been presented in this chapter together with the responses to the items on the questionnaire. These are followed by an evaluation of the responses.

I. DESIGN OF STUDY

The "Scale of Attitudes toward the Mentally Retarded" from "A Study of Attitudes and Understandings of Lay Persons and Regular Classroom Teachers Toward the Mentally Retarded" issued by the State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction provided a valuable reference and furnished substantial direction of the development of the instrument used in this study.¹ The instrument was comprised of thirty items. The items were in the form of statements, and subjects were requested to respond by indicating their reaction to the statements. Five possible choices were provided: Column 1...Strongly Agree; Column 2...Agree; Column 3...Undecided; Column 4...Disagree; Column 5...Strongly Disagree. The instructions emphasized that there were no absolute right or wrong

¹Edward L. Meyen, "A Study of Attitudes and Understandings of Lay Persons and Regular Classroom Teachers Toward the Mentally Retarded" (Des Moines, Iowa: State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction, 1964). (Mimeographed.)

answers. Subjects were also cautioned not to be influenced by how they thought other people might respond but to check the column that reflected their personal reaction to the particular statement.

The following information was requested from each subject:

1. Sex: Male _____ Female _____.
2. Grade Taught: _____.
3. Have you had a college course in teaching the mentally retarded child? Yes _____ No _____.
4. Have you ever taught in a school that contained a special education classroom? Yes _____
No _____.
5. Are you now teaching in a school that contains a special education classroom? Yes _____
No _____.
6. Number of years you have taught: _____.

II. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

A total of 145 subjects from eighteen schools were involved in this study. Of the 145 questionnaires distributed, 107 were returned completed and seven were returned unanswered with the notation that those teachers were no longer at the chosen schools and had not been replaced. Thirty-one questionnaires were not returned.

Of the 107 completed questionnaires seventy-nine subjects had taught in a school containing a Developmental B classroom and twenty-eight had not. The seventy-nine subjects were referred to as Group A and the twenty-eight subjects were referred to as Group B.

In order to transfer the results of the questionnaires into percentages it was necessary to equalize the number of both groups. Therefore twenty-eight subjects were selected by random from the seventy-nine subjects originally in Group A.

The questionnaire items were then analyzed and divided into two categories, those items reflecting attitudes concerning the retarded and those items which were based on knowledge concerning the retarded. The attitude items were then divided into two groups: (1) items in which agreement showed a favorable attitude toward the retarded and (2) items in which disagreement showed a favorable attitude toward the retarded. The knowledge items were likewise divided into two groups: (1) items in which agreement showed knowledge concerning the retarded and (2) items in which disagreement showed knowledge concerning the retarded. The percentage of subjects who responded to the items in these four categories were represented in the four following tables.

TABLE I

PERCENTAGES OF TEACHERS WHO RESPONDED TO ITEMS
IN WHICH AGREEMENT SHOWED FAVORABLE ATTITUDES
BY GROUPS A AND B

G R O U P A				G R O U P B		
ITEM	Agree	Un- decided	Dis- agree	Agree	Un- decided	Dis- agree
5	100	0	0	100	0	0
8	100	0	0	100	0	0
16	79	11	11	96	4	0
18	100	0	0	100	0	0
19	96	4	0	89	4	7
21	100	0	0	100	0	0
22	82	11	7	71	14	14
24	89	7	4	86	0	14

It can be seen from Table I that the majority of subjects in both Groups A and B responded in agreement, indicating that on these items they possess favorable attitudes toward the retarded. Items 5, 8, 18 and 21 received 100 per cent agreement. These items state that a regular classroom teacher's primary obligation

is to all of the children in her class not just to the average or gifted group, that in our society it is as important to make use of the abilities of the mentally retarded as it is the physically handicapped, finances spent on special classes for mentally retarded children are a good expenditure of tax money, and there is a real need for the general public to learn more about mental retardation. However, while 96 per cent of Group B agreed that (item 16) all children have a right to public education only 79 per cent of Group A were in agreement with this item. Eleven per cent were undecided and eleven per cent disagreed.

Most of the teachers expressed disagreement on the items in Table II, indicating favorable attitudes toward the retarded. Item 11 was an exception to this. This item stated: A retarded youth should not expect to participate in the typical teen-age activities available in the community. Only 61 per cent of Group A and 68 per cent of Group B disagreed with this item. Many teachers were also undecided about this item: 29 per cent of Group A and 18 per cent of Group B.

Item 29, which states, I would resent my child having to attend a regular class with a retarded child, had 93 per cent of Group A showing disagreement but only 68 per cent of Group B. Those teachers who had

never taught in a school with special classes for retarded children, Group B, were also 21 per cent undecided on this item. Therefore, on this particular item Group A showed a more favorable attitude toward the retarded.

TABLE II

PERCENTAGES OF TEACHERS WHO RESPONDED TO ITEMS IN WHICH
DISAGREEMENT SHOWED FAVORABLE ATTITUDES
BY GROUPS A AND B

G R O U P A				G R O U P B		
ITEM	Agree	Un- decided	Dis- agree	Agree	Un- decided	Dis- agree
9	0	4	96	0	0	100
11	11	29	61	14	18	68
12	14	4	82	14	4	82
13	4	0	96	0	7	93
17	4	4	93	11	7	82
20	4	4	93	4	7	89
25	7	0	93	0	7	93
26	0	11	89	0	4	96
28	11	21	68	4	7	89
29	4	4	93	11	21	68

However, Group A showed a less favorable attitude than Group B on item 28 which stated: A mentally retarded adult living in my neighborhood would tend to lower the value of my property. Only 68 per cent of Group A disagreed, with 21 per cent undecided, while 89 per cent of Group B disagreed with this item.

TABLE III

PERCENTAGES OF TEACHERS WHO RESPONDED TO ITEMS IN WHICH AGREEMENT SHOWED KNOWLEDGE CONCERNING RETARDED CHILDREN BY GROUPS A AND B

GROUP A				GROUP B		
ITEM	Agree	Un-decided	Dis-agree	Agree	Un-decided	Dis-agree
1	57	4	39	54	11	36
3	96	4	0	100	0	0
6	79	14	7	75	18	7
7	100	0	0	100	0	0
10	96	4	0	93	7	0
14	54	25	21	43	46	11
23	71	29	0	93	4	4
27	75	25	0	93	7	0
30	82	14	4	75	7	18

Table III indicates how knowledgeable the subjects were concerning mental retardation. While the percentages are not as high as in Tables I and II, they still are high enough to indicate that both groups were knowledgeable concerning the retarded.

Both groups agreed 100 per cent with item 7: Special classes for mentally retarded children should have a smaller enrollment than regular classes. All but one person (4 per cent) of Group A admitted that (item 3) a retarded child can be born to any parent. Group B agreed 100 per cent.

Approximately 77 per cent of both groups agreed that (item 6) a mentally retarded youngster finds it difficult to generalize and that (item 30) mental retardation and mental illness are often confused by the general public.

On items 23 and 27 Group B tended to have a higher percentage of knowledgeable teachers. Ninety-three per cent of Group B agreed that (item 23) a separate special class designed to meet the needs of mentally retarded children taught by a trained teacher is the best educational program for these children while only 71 per cent of Group A showed agreement on this item with 29 per cent of Group A undecided. Likewise, 93 per cent of Group B agreed that (item 27) a special

class for mentally retarded children provided by local school districts is a better program for retarded children than placement in a state institution but only 75 per cent of Group A agreed with 25 per cent undecided. It is to be remembered that Group A are the teachers who have taught in a school with special classes for retarded children and yet these teachers are not in complete agreement with the educational programs provided for retarded children.

There were two items on Table III in which neither group showed themselves to be knowledgeable. Item 14 stated that most mentally retarded children can become self-supporting citizens. Group A showed 54 per cent agreeing, 25 per cent undecided, and 21 per cent disagreeing. Group B showed 43 per cent agreeing, 46 per cent undecided, and 11 per cent disagreeing. Item 1 stated that a lay person would feel rather uncomfortable in the presence of a mentally retarded child. Group A showed 57 per cent agreeing, 4 per cent undecided, and 39 per cent disagreeing. Group B showed 54 per cent agreeing, 11 per cent undecided and 36 per cent disagreeing. This item could have been interpreted in two ways however. If the lay person knew the child was retarded it might have made a difference than if he did not know. Therefore, the significance of the

percentages on item 1 was not judged to be valid by the writer.

TABLE IV

PERCENTAGES OF TEACHERS WHO RESPONDED TO ITEMS IN WHICH DISAGREEMENT SHOWED KNOWLEDGE CONCERNING RETARDED CHILDREN BY GROUPS A AND B

G R O U P A				G R O U P B		
ITEM	Agree	Un-decided	Dis-agree	Agree	Un-decided	Dis-agree
2	18	21	61	25	18	57
4	46	0	54	43	0	57
15	4	4	93	7	7	86

Table IV also indicates how knowledgeable the teachers were concerning mental retardation. Item 2 was a check against item 14 in the questionnaire. Item 2 stated: Most mentally retarded youngsters will never become self supporting. Only 61 per cent of Group A disagreed, 21 per cent were undecided and 18 per cent agreed with this item. Of Group B, 57 per cent disagreed,

18 per cent were undecided, and 25 per cent agreed. Fewer teachers in Group B were undecided on this matter when it was presented in item 2 (18 per cent) than when it was presented in item 14 (46 per cent).

Item 4 stated: A mentally retarded youngster generally lacks the physical stamina of the normal child. Only 54 per cent of Group A disagreed, none were undecided and 46 per cent agreed. Likewise, 57 per cent of Group B disagreed, none were undecided, and 43 per cent agreed. This indicates that the retarded child is not understood when his physical mannerisms are concerned.

However, both groups disagreed, Group A 93 per cent and Group B 86 per cent, with item 15: A regular classroom teacher should be able to adequately teach a retarded child along with 25 to 30 regular pupils. This indicates that both groups see the need for special education for retarded children.

III. EVALUATION

The subjects from both groups expressed the opinion that a regular classroom teacher cannot adequately teach a retarded child along with twenty-five to thirty regular pupils. They agreed that a separate special class designed to meet the needs of mentally retarded children taught by a trained teacher is the best educational

program for these children. The subjects also agreed that special classes should have a smaller enrollment than regular classes. However, if a retarded child is enrolled in a regular class it was the opinion of the subjects that this retarded child has as much right to the time and effort of the teacher as does the normal child for a regular classroom teacher's primary obligation is to all of the children in her class, not just to the average or gifted group. In accordance with this the subjects agreed that all children have a right to public education.

Both groups of subjects believed that average ability children and mentally retarded children should associate. They would not mind their own children playing with retarded children or attending school with them when the retarded children were in special classes. However, 21 per cent of Group B were undecided when asked if they would resent having their children attend regular classes with retarded children. Approximately 25 per cent of each group were also undecided as to whether or not a retarded youth should expect to participate in the typical teen-age activities available in the community. Twenty-one per cent of Group A were likewise undecided as to whether or not a mentally retarded adult living in their neighborhood would tend to lower the property value.

Most of the subjects agreed that there is a real need for the general public to learn more about mental retardation and that mental retardation and mental illness are often confused by the general public. The majority also agreed that college students preparing to be teachers should be required to take at least one course in educating mentally retarded children although approximately 12 per cent of each group were undecided on this item. Of the subjects interviewed in this study twenty-three of Group A and five of Group B had had a course in teaching the mentally retarded.

The majority of both groups of subjects demonstrated knowledge concerning the retarded by agreeing that the criteria for the selection of academic subject matter for the mentally retarded should be its possible contribution toward happy childhood and the probable need for it in adult life. They were also aware of the fact that a retarded child can be born to any parent. Correspondingly, they did not believe that mentally retarded children were usually unattractive children.

However, many of the subjects of both groups were either undecided or erroneous in their thinking concerning the retarded child's potential to be self-supporting. Approximately 25 per cent of each group of teachers did not know that a mentally retarded

youngster finds it hard to generalize and only half of the teachers of each group realized that the retarded youngster does not lack the physical stamina of the normal child.

The fact that the majority of both groups demonstrated knowledge concerning the retarded in all likelihood influenced the fact that they also possessed favorable attitudes concerning the retarded.

CHAPTER IV

I. SUMMARY

It was not known whether regular classroom teachers in a school with Developmental B classes expressed more favorable opinions concerning the mentally retarded than did teachers in a school without these special classes. Consequently, it was not known whether mentally retarded children in regular schools were psychologically segregated from the normal children. It was the purpose of this study to present the expressed opinions of regular classroom teachers toward mentally retarded children and to determine whether contact with retarded children provided for more favorable attitudes toward them. These factors were determined by means of a questionnaire study. The importance of this study was based upon the fact that a teacher's attitude toward a child is a factor in defining that child's self-concept and, consequently, in determining the amount of success a child will attain.

Teachers were interviewed from nine schools containing Developmental B classrooms and from nine schools not containing Developmental B classrooms. One hundred forty-five teachers were involved in this study. It is interesting to observe that of the 107 subjects who returned completed questionnaires seventy-nine or 74

per cent had at some time taught in a school that contained a Developmental B classroom.

II. CONCLUSION

In terms of item analysis there appeared to be considerable agreement in the direction of responses between the two sample groups. Any variance which occurred was slight. Most variance was not in the direction of the response but rather in the strength of the response. In general, responses to particular items on the scale indicated that the subjects in this study recognized the rights of mentally retarded children to a public education and favored special class placement as most appropriate for this group. The subjects' responses, as a whole, reflected favorable opinions toward mentally retarded children.

Since both sample groups tended to show agreement in their responses concerning mentally retarded children, it could not be determined whether contact with mentally retarded children provided for more favorable attitudes toward them. However, since favorable opinions were expressed by both sample groups, the writer believes that, in general, insofar as the responses to the questions used in this study are a reflection of the degree of psychological segregation that may be imposed on mentally retarded children by regular classroom

teachers, and insofar as the sample of teachers selected is representative of the attitudes of teachers in Des Moines in general, this kind of segregation does not exist in the Des Moines Public Schools.

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APPENDIX

S T A T E M E N T		S T R O N G L Y	A G R E E	A G R E E	U N D E C I D E D	D I S A G R E E	S D I S A G R E E	
K	1. A lay person would feel rather uncomfortable in the presence of a mentally retarded child.	4	35	5	31	3		A
		-	-	-	-	-	-	B
		0	15	3	9	1		
K	2. Most mentally retarded youngsters will never become self-supporting.	0	15	11	47	6		A
		-	-	-	-	-	-	B
		0	7	5	13	2		
K	3. A retarded child can be born to any parent.	44	19	2	0	0		A
		-	-	-	-	-	-	B
		18	10	0	0	0		
K	4. A mentally retarded youngster generally lacks the physical stamina of the normal child.	2	25	8	36	7		A
		-	-	-	-	-	-	B
		1	9	0	14	2		
F-A	5. A regular classroom teacher's primary obligation is to all of the children in her class not just to the average or "gifted" group.	55	24	0	0	0		A
		-	-	-	-	-	-	B
		20	8	0	0	0		
K	6. A mentally retarded youngster finds it difficult to generalize.	16	38	18	6	0		A
		-	-	-	-	-	-	B
		9	11	4	1	0		

NOTE: Group A have taught in a school with special classes for retarded children.

Group B have not taught in a school with special classes for retarded children.

S T A T E M E N T		S T R O N G L Y	A G R E E	A G R E E	U N D E C I D E D	D I S A G R E E	S D I S A G R E E	
K	7. Special classes for mentally retarded children should have a smaller enrollment than regular classes.	63	15	1	0	0		A
		22	5	0	0	0		B
F-A	8. In our society it is as important to make use of the abilities of the mentally retarded as it is the physically handicapped.	44	32	3	0	0		A
		14	14	0	0	0		B
F-D	9. It is unfair to assign only 10 or 15 pupils to teachers of special classes for mentally retarded children when regular classroom teachers are assigned 25 to 30 pupils.	1	1	1	36	49		A
		0	0	0	12	16		B
K	10. A mentally retarded youngster has a short memory and attention span.	24	49	4	1	1		A
		10	16	3	0	0		B
F-D	11. A retarded youth should not expect to participate in the typical teenage activities available in the community.	3	6	15	48	7		A
		0	4	5	16	3		B

NOTE: Group A have taught in a school with special classes for retarded children.

Group B have not taught in a school with special classes for retarded children.

S T A T E M E N T		S T R O N G L Y	A G R E E	A G R E E	U N D E C I D E D	D I S A G R E E	S D I R S O N G R E E	
F-D	12. Mentally retarded children are usually unattractive children.	1	5	2	47	19	A	
		0	3	1	16	7		B
F-D	13. I would not want my children attending a school where there is a special class for retarded children.	1	0	1	28	49	A	
		0	0	0	11	15		B
K	14. Most mentally retarded children can become self-supporting citizens.	3	36	27	12	1	A	
		0	12	13	3	0		B
K	15. A regular classroom teacher should be able to adequately teach a retarded child along with 25 to 30 regular pupils.	1	1	3	30	44	A	
		1	2	2	8	16		B
F-A	16. All children have a right to public education.	45	27	4	1	2	A	
		13	14	0	0	0		B
F-D	17. A retarded child is usually identified in regular rooms because of his lack of neatness.	1	3	3	48	25	A	
		0	3	2	15	8		B

NOTE: Group A have taught in a school with special classes for retarded children.

Group B have not taught in a school with special classes for retarded children.

S T A T E M E N T		S T R O N G L Y	A G R E E	A G R E E	U N D E C I D E D	D I S A G R E E	S D I S A N G R E Y	
F-A	18. Finances spent on special classes for mentally retarded children is a good expenditure of tax money.	42	45	1	1	0		A
		11	17	0	0	0		B
F-A	19. The criteria for the selection of academic subject matter for the mentally retarded should be its possible contribution toward happy childhood and the probable need for it in adult life.	31	40	5	1	0		A
		9	16	1	1	1		B
F-D	20. Average ability children should not associate with mentally retarded children at school.	1	0	5	41	32		A
		1	0	0	16	9		B
F-A	21. There is a real need for the general public to learn more about mental retardation.	48	30	0	0	1		A
		14	14	0	0	0		B
F-A	22. In view of the large number of mentally retarded children enrolled in regular classes, all college students preparing to be teachers should be required to take at least one course in "educating mentally retarded children".	24	38	13	4	0		A
		9	11	4	4	0		B

NOTE: Group A have taught in a school with special classes for retarded children.
Group B have not taught in a school with special classes for retarded children.

S T A T E M E N T		S T R O N G L Y	A G R E E	U N D E C I D E D	D I S A G R E E	S D I R S O A N G R E E	
K	23. A separate special class designed to meet the needs of mentally retarded children taught by a trained teacher is the best educational program for these children.	41	29	8	1	0	A
		- - 12	- - 14	- - 1	- - 1	- - 0	B
F-A	24. A retarded child enrolled in a regular class has as much right to the time and effort of the teacher as does the normal child.	16	51	7	3	1	A
		- - 4	- - 20	- - 0	- - 4	- - 0	B
F-D	25. Special classes for mentally retarded children are too expensive in terms of the value the retarded child gains from them.	2	0	2	47	28	A
		- - 0	- - 0	- - 2	- - 13	- - 13	B
F-D	26. I would prefer that my own children did not play with any child who is mentally retarded.	0	0	8	48	23	A
		- - 0	- - 0	- - 1	- - 20	- - 7	B
K	27. A special class for mentally retarded children provided by local school districts is a better program for retarded children than placement in a state institution.	28	37	14	0	0	A
		- - 9	- - 17	- - 2	- - 0	- - 0	B

NOTE: Group A have taught in a school with special classes for retarded children.

Group B have not taught in a school with special classes for retarded children.

S T A T E M E N T		S T R O N G L Y	A G R E E	A G R E E	U N D E C I D E D	D I S A G R E E	S D I S A G R E E	
F-D	28. A mentally retarded adult living in my neighborhood would tend to lower the value of my property.	2	1	16	40	20		A
		- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	B
F-D	29. I would resent my child having to attend a regular class with a retarded child.	1	4	9	43	22		A
		- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	B
K	30. Mental retardation and mental illness are often confused by the general public.	17	52	6	1	2		A
		- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	B
		4	17	2	5	0		

NOTE: Group A have taught in a school with special classes for retarded children.

Group B have not taught in a school with special classes for retarded children.